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Commission on the Status of Women
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Agenda item 3 (c)*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by United States Committee for UNIFEM, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2006/1.

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Statement

The United States Committee for UNIFEM (UNIFEM USA) supports the innovative and catalytic programs of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which have particular relevance to the two areas of discussion for the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):

- Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work.
- Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.

Pursuing its mandate to ensure the involvement of women in mainstream development activities, particularly at the pre-investment stage, UNIFEM has been a leading force promoting women's economic rights and economic security as a means to reducing women's poverty and exclusion. UNIFEM's activities have focused on guaranteeing women and girls rights to land and inheritance and on increasing access to decent employment, resources, markets, training, and information technology.

UNIFEM's recent publication, *Progress of the World's Women 2005* gives evidence on how decent work is basic to achieving economic security. The report documents that worldwide women are concentrated in poorly paid, unsafe and insecure jobs, with the informal sector requiring special attention. This study provides models of what can and should be done to help the working poor, especially women, minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of their work. It also suggests the necessity of advocacy to stop the generation of informal, insecure and badly paid employment by expanding formal employment opportunities as well as taking action to increase social protection and representative voice for the working poor, especially women.

Additionally, one of UNIFEM's strategic focus areas, ending violence against women, concentrates on the "enhanced participation of women in development" through education and health initiatives. Since its start in 1997, the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which funds innovative projects primarily at the national and local levels, has awarded $10 million in grants to 178 initiatives in 100 countries to educate women and enhance their capacities to combat violence.

Another strategic focus area of UNIFEM is reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls. Gender-based violence is also one of the leading factors in HIV infection. UNIFEM has enlisted with a broad range of partners from governments and parliamentarians to faith-based groups and local villages to develop public awareness and prevention for HIV/AIDS.

The Trust Fund has contributed significantly to identifying forward-looking strategies to promote gender equality and the advancement of women and girls. However, at present, the Fund can only support one of every 15 grant applications, leaving hundreds of worthy projects unfunded each year. UNIFEM USA urges Member States and private donors to increase support to the Trust Fund to strengthen its potential as a strong mechanism for global action for women's human rights.

UNIFEM USA has supported UNIFEM's activities to combat violence against women both by organizing annual Spring Walks where the donations of participating organizations are earmarked for the Trust Fund and by encouraging its chapters to hold annual events which raise awareness and resources for UNIFEM's anti-violence efforts.

UNIFEM's efforts surrounding its strategic goal that focuses on achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war, address the second theme of this year's CSW, i.e. "the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels". UNIFEM's programs have been especially effective in promoting women's leadership in peace negotiations and post-conflict situations in Africa and Asia. In Afghanistan and Iraq, where new constitutions and new governing bodies have been created, UNIFEM has provided training on women's rights to government officials and NGOs to ensure strong women's participation.

With the goal of achieving gender equality throughout the world, UNIFEM/USA strongly supports UNIFEM's work to strengthen and expand the compliance of Member States with treaty obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its efforts to promote universal ratification and the removal of reservations to CEDAW.

UNIFEM/USA calls attention to this year as the Thirtieth Anniversary of UNIFEM and again urges member states to provide sufficient financial resources for this important UN agency to continue and expand its important work in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.